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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000429

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SUBJECT: WIRAJUDA RAISES BURMA, MIDEAST IN AMBASSADOR'S
FAREWELL CALL

Classified By: B. Lynn Pascoe, Ambassador. Reason: 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) Summary. During the Ambassador's farewell call on February 13, Indonesian Foreign Minister Wirajuda said he was pressing ASEAN to form a three-country "troika" (Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore) to re-engage Burma. The Ambassador questioned the efficacy of ASEAN's dialogue with Burma to date. On the Middle East, Wirajuda said he had brought a "message of unity" on his recent travel to Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, and he confirmed that he is pursuing a meeting in Jakarta between Hamas and Fatah to promote a national unity government. End summary.

Burma

12. (C) Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda raised the subject of Burma during the Ambassador's February 13 farewell call. Wirajuda said that in the wake of the January 12 U.N. Security Council vote, ASEAN is reevaluating its approach to Burma. Since last July, he said, ASEAN had "washed its hands" of the problem, meaning that it would neither press the regime nor defend it in international fora. The UNSC vote had changed matters, Wirajuda said. Despite the fact that the resolution had failed, Burma was unnerved that it was in the international spotlight and may now be more willing to open discussion with ASEAN. This would enable Burma to avoid losing face in another confrontation with the United Nations. Wirajuda claimed that at the January 9 - 15 ASEAN summit in Cebu, there had been talk of creating an ASEAN "troika" to engage Burma. This troika would consist of Indonesia (as UNSC member), Singapore, and the Philippines (as future and current ASEAN chairs). Wirajuda claimed that shortly after the vote, the Chinese foreign minister had urged him to get ASEAN to do more with Burma. Wirajuda also said he had urged his Indian counterpart not just to promote its trade and energy interests in Burma, but to press for reform as well. The Indians, Wirajuda said, had not "replied directly."

13. (C) The Ambassador pointed out that ASEAN had tried a variety of approaches to Burma in recent years, none of which had been successful. The issue, he said, was as much identifying an outcome as a format for engagement. He asked what ASEAN seeks to accomplish in its dialogue with Burma, regardless of the format it chooses. Wirajuda said that following their visit to Rangoon in March 2006, he and President Yudhoyono had concluded that the military was insecure about its position in any reformed Burma. Wirajuda recalled that during the Soeharto era, the Burmese regime had

been interested in the "dual function" role of the Indonesian military as a possible paradigm for reform. Suharto's New Order was less repressive than Burma's regime at the time, and the Burmese had even sent a delegation to Indonesia to examine how it worked. "But then we surprised them by reforming," Wirajuda said, describing this episode as still relevant. A "dual function" role for the Burmese military could be introduced for a limited period of perhaps five years in Burma as a transitional arrangement to a more democratic system, Wirajuda suggested. He added that Senior General Than Shwe would probably not be on the scene five years from now in any case, which would presumably ease the transition.

14. (C) Wirajuda said that Burma tends to trust Indonesia because of similar historical experiences. Both countries had fought for their independence, and had struggled to maintain national unity despite ethnic and regional diversity. Unlike Thailand, he said, Indonesia does not have commercial or other interests in Burma.

Mideast

15. (C) The Ambassador asked for a readout of Wirajuda's February 3 - 5 trip to Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. Wirajuda said that he had made the "message of unity" his overarching theme. The region is torn by multiple conflicts, in contrast to Southeast Asia. In Lebanon, Wirajuda said he had been deeply concerned about tensions between the government and the various armed factions. Everyone was talking about dialogue, he said, but there were clearly conflicts simmering just beneath the surface. Despite Syria's protestations that these were Lebanese internal

JAKARTA 00000429 002 OF 002

affairs, it is clear that Syria is still influencing events and will intervene if armed conflict breaks out.

16. (C) In Palestine, Wirajuda said he had pressed Hamas to form a national unity government with Fatah. He added that the Syrians told him that they had urged Hamas to do this as well. Wirajuda had also told Hamas that even if it rejected the Oslo and Sharm al-Sheikh peace frameworks, it should at least be open to the Arab peace proposal.

17. (C) Foreign Minister Wirajuda said that he believed Indonesia could be an honest broker in hosting a conference between the two Palestinian factions, and he would be happy to discuss this initiative with the Secretary in March. He added that the Secretary is still interested in Indonesia's initiative on Iraq. The Ambassador asked for Wirajuda's assessment of Egypt's role in the process, noting that in the past the Egyptians had cast themselves in the role of the Palestinians' "big brothers." Regional Arab players, Wirajuda, had become part of the Palestinian problem. President Abbas, he said, was "tired of Arab politics," and "likes Asian Muslims." Wirajuda said that his proposal to host a Palestinian conference had the support of the OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, who was recently

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visited Indonesia.
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